

EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION SHOULD FULLY PROTECT THE FREEDOMS OF ALL RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES WITHOUT DISTINCTION

SPEECH OF

**HON. STENY H. HOYER**

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 14, 2006*

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this important Resolution offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), urging the Russian Federation to fully protect the freedoms of all religious communities without distinction, whether registered or unregistered, as stipulated by the Russian Constitution and international standards.

It is undoubtedly true that the Russian Federation has made democratic progress since the breakup of the former Soviet Union. However, there is legitimate cause for concern that Russia is backsliding on some of the most basic democratic values, including the fundamental and inalienable human right to worship God according to the dictates of one's own conscience.

As this Resolution points out, registration is critical for religious groups to fully enjoy their religious freedoms. In fact, many of the rights and privileges afforded to religious communities are contingent upon registration.

Yet, some religious communities have been unjustly denied registration or had their registration improperly terminated. Other religious communities refuse to seek registration on theological or other grounds. In addition, there have been arson attacks on unregistered Protestant churches, with little or no effective response to bring the perpetrators to justice. And, in some areas of the Russian Federation, law enforcement authorities have carried out violent actions against believers from unregistered communities peacefully practicing their faith.

These actions are counter to values that democratic society's embrace and they are simply unacceptable.

As the former Chair and Ranking Democrat on the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, I am well aware of the history of religious persecution and discrimination in Russia. In fact, when I served as Chairman of the Commission, I frequently met with religious dissidents and their families in the former Soviet Union. For example, during a Congressional delegation trip in 1988, Congressman SMITH and I met with Russian Baptists at the Hotel Pulkovo in Leningrad and with Father Gleb Yakunin at his apartment in Moscow. I also met with numerous Soviet Jewish refuseniks, some of whom were prosecuted for teaching Jewish traditions and history.

This Resolution, among other things, urges the Russian Federation to ensure full protection of freedoms for all religious communities without distinction, whether registered or unregistered, and to end the harassment of unregistered religious groups by the security apparatus and other government agencies. In addition, it urges the Russian Federation to vigorously investigate acts of violence against unregistered religious communities.

Mr. Speaker, I know there is sometimes a temptation to look upon Resolutions such as

this one as mere words on paper without significant meaning. However, we know from experience that we must never underestimate the power of our democratic ideals and values.

The truth is, the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975—with its emphasis on respect for human rights—was instrumental in focusing attention on human rights abuses, including religious persecution, in the former Soviet Union. And, the attention on these abuses was such an embarrassment to the former Soviet government that it slowly, if grudgingly, began to address them.

Today, we must be no less vigilant in holding the Russian government to account for these on-going abuses.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this Resolution.

EXTENDING NORMAL TRADE RELATIONS TREATMENT TO UKRAINE

SPEECH OF

**HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 8, 2006*

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, today we have the opportunity to recognize Ukraine's great strides since its emergence from the Iron Curtain. Indeed, the "Orange Revolution" ignited by the fraudulent elections of 2004 demonstrated the commitment of the Ukrainian people to a democratic future. By graduating Ukraine from Jackson-Vanik and extending Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR), we can help consolidate the Ukrainian government's adherence to this path.

The Jackson-Vanik amendment, enacted in 1974, originally focused on free emigration, but it became a symbol for all basic human rights including political freedom, freedom from religious discrimination, and freedom for the press. While its candidacy for Jackson-Vanik graduation demonstrates Ukraine's significant progress on these issues, there are still major areas where further improvement is necessary.

Specifically, the Ukrainian government and President Yushchenko must do more to live up to their pledge to fight anti-Semitism and condemn all ethnic and religious discrimination.

Over the past several years, Ukraine's largest private university, known in Ukraine as MAUP, has become a hotbed of anti-Semitic activity. In 2005, the school hosted an anti-Zionist conference featuring white supremacist David Duke and other Holocaust deniers from around the world and its President fervently supported the President of Iran's call for the destruction of Israel. The school has published and distributed "Mein Kampf" and "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," and leading figures at the school have petitioned to bar Jewish organization in Ukraine and ban Jewish texts.

It is important that the Ukrainian government and President Yushchenko's "Our Ukraine" party have strongly condemned the university leaders. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have called the school's activities unlawful. The time has come for the government to reexamine the school's certification and prosecute those re-

sponsible for violating Ukraine's anti-incitement laws.

In addition, the government must take action to return communal religious property confiscated during the Soviet era through a standardized, timely, and transparent process.

Jackson-Vanik graduation is an important step forward in the strategic relationship between the United States and Ukraine. But it is by no means an end to the need for scrutiny of Ukraine's adherence to fundamental human rights values. As a member of the Congressional Ukraine Caucus and a co-chair of the Congressional Task Force Against Anti-Semitism, I support this legislation, but I believe it is vital that we continue pushing Ukraine in the right direction.

A TRIBUTE TO MERCEDES  
DESORMEAUX NARCISSE

**HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 15, 2006*

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Mercedes Desormeaux Narcisse, Esq., a distinguished member of the Brooklyn community. It behooves us to pay tribute to this outstanding leader and I hope my colleagues will join me in recognizing her impressive accomplishments.

Mercedes Desormeaux Narcisse was born in Haiti and moved to Brooklyn as a teenager. From high school on, Ms. Desormeaux Narcisse was completely educated in New York. Growing up, she attended South Shore High, Tilden High, New York City Technical College and St. Joseph College.

Ms. Desormeaux Narcisse is currently the CEO and owner of Statewide Medical and Surgical Supplies Inc., located in the heart of Brooklyn. Preceding her exceptional accomplishments at Statewide, she was in charge of medical and surgical supplies for over 10 years. In addition, Ms. Desormeaux Narcisse is a registered Nurse and worked in the profession of home care, emergency room/trauma, neurology, and renal/oncology for over 15 years. In that time she was employed at several major hospitals in Queens and Brooklyn.

Ms. Desormeaux Narcisse holds extensive certificates for Orthotic fitting, ACLS, Chemotherapy, Peritoneal Dialysis, HIV Therapy, Wound Care, Infection Control and non-violent crisis intervention.

Mercedes Desormeaux Narcisse is an active participant in the community. She is currently president of the 41st Assembly District Democratic Club, which she has been a member of for the last five years. Ms. Desormeaux Narcisse is also President of Canarsie by Choice and has played a vital role in revitalizing the Avenue L Merchant Association. Additionally she sits on various boards and committees including Community Board 18, the Lions Club, Canarsie Bridges and the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. Of particular importance to Ms. Desormeaux Narcisse is her local "Toys for Tots" chapter called "Brooklyn Toys for Tots." Working closely with New York City Councilman, Lew Fidler, and his Chief of Staff, Bryan Lee, at the 41st Assembly District Democratic Club, the Brooklyn Toys for Tots collected over 1,700 toys for the area's less fortunate children.

Ms. Desormeaux Narcisse's actions have not gone without recognition in the community. In 2005, the Friends of New York City Assemblyman, Nick Perry, honored Ms. Desormeaux Narcisse for her outstanding service to the community. Ms. Patricia Trim and her "Trim for Tots" organization also honored Ms. Desormeaux Narcisse for her continuing work in the community and continuing to "work in making life easier for underprivileged kids."

Mercedes Desormeaux Narcisse has played the role of loving mother, caring nurse, successful businesswoman and compassionate community member. Her vivacious and affectionate character has won the hearts of many. Today, we applaud Ms. Desormeaux Narcisse for her devoted and unselfish character. Her commitment and empathy for our community is above and beyond and for that I ask that we recognize this phenomenal woman today.

Mr. Speaker, please join our community in honoring Mercedes Desormeaux Narcisse for her dedication and outstanding service to our community.

**EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION SHOULD FULLY PROTECT THE FREEDOMS OF ALL RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES WITHOUT DISTINCTION**

SPEECH OF

**HON. MIKE MCINTYRE**

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 14, 2006*

Mr. MCINTYRE. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the House is considering H. Con. Res. 190 today, that urges the Russian Federation to protect fully the freedoms of all religious communities without distinction, whether registered and unregistered, as stipulated by the Russian Constitution and international standards. As stated in the resolution, the United States throughout its history has sought to protect the fundamental and inalienable human right to seek, know, and serve God according to the dictates of one's own conscience. I completely agree. The "first right" of religious freedom must be respected, and so this resolution is of critical importance.

The Russian Federation is an OSCE participating State and has freely committed to protect this right, so that all may freely profess and practice the religion or belief, either alone or in community with others. Russia has promised to do this through numerous OSCE documents, but also in its own constitution. Article 28 of the Russian constitution declares "everyone shall be guaranteed the right to freedom of conscience, to freedom of religious worship, including the right to profess, individually or jointly with others, any religion."

Unfortunately, this fundamental right is not always observed, especially for groups that are not registered with the government. For groups denied registration, who have had their registration stripped, or refuse registration on religious grounds, the lack of registration means they experience significant difficulties in enjoying their religious liberties. Registration is critical for religious groups to enjoy fully their religious freedoms, as many rights and privileges afforded to religious communities are contingent on obtaining registration.

In addition to discrimination by local authorities, in the last two years there have been more than ten arson attacks estimated on unregistered Protestant churches. At a Helsinki Commission hearing that I attended last year on problems facing unregistered religious groups in Russia, I was troubled to learn of the lack of effective action by law enforcement to bring the criminals to justice. The perpetrators of these hateful acts have gone unpunished, with police and other officials turning a blind eye. In the worst cases, law enforcement personnel have actually been the persecutors, carrying out violent actions against individuals from unregistered communities who are only wishing to practice peacefully their faith.

In closing, the Russian Federation is urged to do more, to ensure that all may fully enjoy their religious liberties. I therefore urge my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 190.

**A TRIBUTE TO DR. MANANA PETROV**

**HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 15, 2006*

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Dr. Manana Petrov, a distinguished member of the Brooklyn community. I am honored to pay tribute to this outstanding leader and I hope my colleagues will join me in recognizing her impressive accomplishments.

Dr. Manana Petrov was born in the former Soviet Union during the height of the Cold War. Upon graduation from high school, Dr. Petrov enrolled in Rostov Medical Institute. When Dr. Petrov's family was forced to move to the Georgia Republic, she transferred and graduated from the Tbilisi Medical Institute. Dr. Petrov worked as a physician in the former Soviet Union until she, her husband and her daughter immigrated to the United States. Driven by the need to put food on the table, Dr. Petrov passed all of her medical exams within a year of immigrating to the U.S. Following the completion of her medical exams, Dr. Petrov began her residency at the Brooklyn Hospital working tirelessly to support her family.

In 1997, Dr. Petrov successfully passed her licensing exam and is currently Double-Board Certified in Internal Medicine and Hospice and Palliative Care. She has been serving as the attending physician at Brooklyn Hospital for the last 9 years. During her time at Brooklyn Hospital, Dr. Petrov has served as an outstanding role model for aspiring doctors and was nominated as the "Best Teaching Attending." Additionally, in 2000, she was appointed Medical Director of Hospice of New York and in 2003, she was named the Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine at the Brooklyn Hospice Center. Also in 2003, Dr. Petrov opened her own practice in Brooklyn, NY and is faithfully serving her patients to this day. Dr. Petrov has also worked for the last 5 years as an Associate Program Director in an Internal Medicine Program and boasts two publications in medical journals.

Dr. Manana Petrov is an inspiration to not only those in the medical profession, but to our entire community. She has overcome nu-

merous obstacles to realize her dream of becoming a doctor. Dr. Manana Petrov encompasses the true identity of a role model in today's society and for that I ask that we applaud her accomplishments and contribution to our community.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is incumbent on this body to recognize the accomplishments of Dr. Manana Petrov, as she offers her talents and community services for the good of our local communities.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Manana Petrov's selfless service has continuously demonstrated a level of altruistic dedication that makes her most worthy of our recognition today.

Mr. Speaker, please join our community in honoring Dr. Manana Petrov for her dedication and outstanding service to our community.

**HONORING THE LIFE OF BRIAN J. SCHOFF**

**HON. LINCOLN DAVIS**

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 15, 2006*

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay my respects to Corporal Brian J. Schoff for his service to a grateful nation. Corporal Schoff may have given his life in defense of his country, but his soul and spirit will live on to the many who knew him. During a funeral procession in Manchester, Tennessee hundreds of people stood outside their homes and along the road to honor their fallen soldier.

Corporal Schoff, a member of 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, was awarded a posthumous promotion from Private First Class to Corporal, a Purple Heart, the Bronze Star, and Good Conduct Medal for his service.

While I didn't know Corporal Schoff personally, I do know the quality of our soldiers serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the globe. They are caring, patriotic, God-fearing men and women. I wish to extend my heartfelt appreciation to Brian Schoff for his selfless sacrifice. May he live on in eternal happiness with his Lord in heaven.

Corporal Schoff is survived by his father, Brian L. Schoff; his mother, Cathy Odle; his stepfather, Kenneth Odle; stepsons, Alicia Burgess and LaDawn Mauk; stepmother, Debra Schoff; and his half-sister, Brianna Schoff.

**A TRIBUTE TO ROBIN KELLY SHEARES**

**HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 15, 2006*

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Robin Kelly Sheares, Esq., a distinguished member of the Brooklyn community. Robin Sheares was born in Harlem to the late Gloria and Herman Sheares. At the tender age of 6, her family moved to Bedford-Stuyvesant and ever since she has been a member of the Brooklyn community.

A proud graduate of the public school system, Robin has been an attorney for nearly 20